

Spilling Blood and Ink

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By Robbie Friedmann

Talking about peace is a bit difficult when people are blown up all over. Yet, nowhere is the contradiction between what the West wants to believe and the actual statements and actions by those who claim to speak on behalf of people, governments, and religions, more evident than in the Arab microcosm represented by the Palestinians. With an almost three-year wave of strategic violence against Israel still in full blast (pun intended) there are already claims that if the Temple Mount area will be opened (by Israel) for visits by Jews, a third wave of violence (*intifada*) will emerge ("Arafat aide: Third intifada if Jews visit Temple Mount," Khaled Abu Toameh, *The Jerusalem Post*, 18 May 2003).

This could pose a classification problem for observers of Arab violence because the current wave is already called by the Arabs the Al-Aqsa Intifada. So perhaps violence that ended up on a given date, say on a Saturday, will be *Al-Aqsa 1*, if it resumes on Sunday it will be *Al-Aqsa 2* and so on. In the midst of a well intended - if misguided - American effort to carve out a peace agreement (which may end up carving Israel) the *Palestinian leadership* sees the continuation of attacks on Israel as *our legitimate right* and Israel itself as a *criminal* entity that has *no right* to exist: "There will be no security for settlers or the occupation forces... the Palestinians can never forgive the Israeli murderers or make peace with them." The direct implication being that there will be no peace with Israel and no Israel.

If there were any doubts about the (destructive) role that Arafat is (still) playing, he declared last week that *his* prime minister reports to him ("Arafat: Abu Mazen reports to me," *The Jerusalem Post* Internet Staff, 18 May 2003) repeating his mantra that terrorism occurs because of *occupation*. By now it should be clear enough that occupation does not mean the post 1967 boundaries but all of Israel. The reason Arafat is not (yet) expelled (or killed) by Israel is an (untested) assessment that it could make the situation even worse than it currently is ("Arafat's expulsion would destroy peace process: PA foreign minister," *The Associated Press*, *The Jerusalem Post*, 20 May 2003).

Arafat talks about *peace* yet continues to send his assassins to kill civilians inside Israel. It is interesting that even the term *assassin* in English came from an Arab word describing those under the influence of hashish who then went on their killing *missions* (Ismaelis).

At least (what a dubious consolation) some extremists in the Palestinian camp say in English what all others say in Arabic and they proudly declare their mission statement to anyone willing to listen ("[Why militants reject the Roadmap](#)," James Rodgers, BBC, 20 May 2003): "These attacks will continue in all the territories of 1948 and 1967, and we will not stop attacking the Zionist Jewish people as long as any of them remain in our land."

The only reason they are considered extremists and militants is because Arafat and his cronies, (including the current prime minister - despite the appearance of tensions between them; see "A

Self Portrait of Mahmoud Abbas, the PA Prime Minister: The Abbas Doctrine - Selective Terrorism, Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, 19 May 2003) are still the media darlings but they act and preach the same uncompromising positions, and whatever agreement they will reach they see as temporary success on their road(map) to annihilate Israel. As clearly stated by Hamas' Dr Abdel-Aziz Rantissi: "What they consider as the far goal for them, we consider as just a stage in our struggle."

Against this backdrop it is not surprising that Israelis are wonderingly asking themselves if the U.S. is truly with Israel because some of the actions the U.S. is taking defy clear declarations made by its leadership including President George W. Bush ("Are you with us?," Editorial, *The Jerusalem Post*, 19 May 2003). The *JP* editorial observes that "While Arab states have openly embraced the distinction between *good* and *bad* terrorism, Europe is close behind, and the U.S. maintains a significant gap between principle and practice. Europeans condemn terrorism against Israel, but demonize Israel for fighting back. The fact that a prominent strain of European opinion still regards Palestinians as victims and Israelis as aggressors is read by the terrorists as a moral endorsement and sign that they have chosen a right and effective path." Then it argues "If the U.S. wants the Arab world to break decisively with the idea of *good* terror, it must show the way by not treating the Palestinians differently than the Taliban or Saddam Hussein just because of the Palestinian claim to a good cause."

While one can understand the relative shock feigned by the Saudis about terrorism (that is now directed against them), their reaction is a mixture of crocodile tears and blatant racism that still proves the distinction the Saudis make between *good* and *bad* terrorism. In an editorial that forcefully condemns terrorism ("The Victim Is Islam," Editorial, *Arab News*, 20 May 2003) the Saudis are quick to again see the Arabs, Muslims, Islam, as the victim. Yet they still see as legitimate the murdering of Jews and Israelis. How else would one interpret the following paragraph?:

"Jews (in Morocco) were another target. But not Israeli Jews or even American or European Jews on holiday. No, these were Moroccan Jews Arab Jews for whom Morocco is as much home as it is for all other Moroccans. The Casablanca outrages had nothing to do with resentment over Iraq. This was about religious bigotry, a seething bitter rage among a deviant, minuscule number of Muslims against the entire non-Muslim world; and that includes all the West." Deviant? Minuscule? Not really. The entire West? Perhaps so as long as it does not include Israel which is still a free for all (terror) and thus the Saudis are actually - despite their rhetoric - still not getting it. Or they are, and essentially are trying very hard to tempt the world: "get rid of Israel and terrorism will stop."

A large amount of propaganda ink was spilled by the Palestinians to engender to notion that they have always been an indigenous population of *Palestine* and hence have a *legitimate claim* to the territory as they see it. Yet studies of immigration patterns in that area strengthen the counter claim that there was a substantial Arab immigration into the area which is responsible (as well as its ensuing birth-rate) for the size of the current Arab population that defines itself as *Palestinian* thus debunking the notion of being indigenous ("[The Smoking Gun: Arab Immigration into Palestine, 1922-1931](#)," Fred M. Gottheil, *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol 10, No.1, Winter 2003).

It is therefore relevant to observe, again, that the Palestinians are a political tool in the hands of the Arabs who use them as a weapon (pun intended) against Israel. The Arabs (with the generous help of the U.N.) have perpetuated the Palestinian ("refugee") problem with the aimed purpose of annihilating Israel rather than solving the induced-plight of their Arab brothers ("[The Suffering Palestinians](#)," Mona Charen, *The Washington Times*, 22 May 2003): "There is very little sincere concern around the world for the *plight* of the Palestinians. If there were, their situation in Arab countries would draw more attention. As it is, Palestinians are only useful as a club with which to beat Israel. It is disgusting that the Arabs are willing to do this to their own cousins, and equally dismaying that world opinion endorses it." Indeed, when approximately two billion dollars are found in cash and gold in Iraq, they dwarf the reported \$35 million "generosity" of Saddam Hussein towards the Palestinians and prove again that it was tactical funding to support terrorism and instability, not charity for community development.

When politicians come up with outrageously unsubstantiated statements they either get (re)elected or booted out of office. When academics do so they get promoted and tenured. A new apparent rising "star" is following in the footsteps of mentors and against all available evidence argues that "Jihad is Over" (see, *Sandstorm*, Martin Kramer, 19 May 2003).

This attitude then filters down to opinion columns that argue - without any sound evidence to support their case - that the threat of a possible theocracy in Iraq should not be of concern to the Europeans and Americans because the mosque is a *positive* social force that is not a threat to democracy ("Mosque and State: Theocracy in Iraq? Not to Worry," Zachary Karabell, *The Wall Street Journal*, 19 May 2003). Of course the mosque has positive social aspects to its followers and Hitler wanted to guarantee a car for every German citizen. The problem is not so much the mosque's followers but with extremists like those in Iran, Egypt, Hamas, or Saudi Arabia, who then use the pulpit to direct their animosity towards the "infidels" everywhere.

Indeed, the threat is coming from those who define themselves as devout Muslims who *truly* represent the Mosque and they continuously call for attacks against Jews and Americans, and recently even against Arab countries that aided the coalition in the war against Saddam ("[New Tape, Linked to bin Laden Aide, Urges More Attacks](#)," Neil Macfarquhar and Don Van Natta Jr., *The New York Times*, 22 May 2002).

And the West? It seems it is still busy with internal arguments and covering up crucial differences between various "allies" to the extent that instead of shaping a united front against terrorism leaders are busy restraining each other from doing so ("Anti-Terror Leaders Restrain Each Other Instead of the Terrorists," DEBKAFfile Exclusive Report, 19 May 2003): "... instead of focusing on putting down terror, Bush, Abdullah and Sharon are all busy tying each other hands to protect their standing at home, thereby leaving Osama bin Laden and Yasser Arafat free to strike. No one should therefore be surprised to see both terror masters thriving and expanding their suicide offensives."

And when it comes to the media? Reporters who cheat may sign million dollar book contracts and other draw hefty sums on the lecture circuit. It appears that the darling of the *New York Times* is becoming the center of increasing criticism in his own town where apparently he is no longer the

prophet. Some debunk his arguments as using unfitting metaphors ("A Shake of the Wheel: The mixed-metaphor madness of Thomas Friedman," *New York Press*, Volume 16, Issue 20) and others for being overly self-centered if not narcissistic ("I and I: The World According to Tom Friedman," Media & Politics, Alexander Cockburn, *New York Press*, Volume 16, Issue 20).

Yet, his (negative) influence on (among others) the American Jewish left is acknowledged as rather powerful ("U.S. Jewish Left Ascendant," Jonathan S. Tobin, *The Jerusalem Post*, 21 May 2003): "Led by their cheerleaders in the American press, including *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, lately the Jewish Left has taken on the appearance of a 13th tribe of Israel. And they are gaining strength as they go all out to demonize Sharon, the settlers and Christian Zionists, who have become an important factor in securing support for Israel."

Perhaps the damage that such journalism does to truth is eloquently illustrated by a critical look at how opinions are shaped and how facts are conveniently ignored or suppressed ("Just the Facts," Caroline B. Glick, *The Jerusalem Post*, 15 May 2003). The expression that the first victim of war is truth might be well paraphrased to the second victim of "truth" is war. Given the incessant lies and twisted policies so flagrantly current in what passes for both Arab diplomacy and Arab terrorism a belated understanding of how information is passed on (or is not) to the public becomes nothing less than a must-task.

With the looming American presidential visit in the Middle East it appears that the diplomatic mistakes are mounting up. First, the declaration made in President Bush's 24 June 2002 speech that there should be a Palestinian state. Such recognition was uncalled for (except by Arab pressure) because the assumption it made that terrorism may stop with the incentive of a state proved to be false; second, the design and endorsement of a *Roadmap* that deviates from the principles President Bush espoused in his 24 June speech; third, by pressing Israel to accept the Roadmap as if it is an ultimatum; and fourth, by traveling to the area and using presidential prestige in an effort that is doomed to fail.

The Roadmap is counterproductive - if not destructive - because it rewards terrorism plain and simple; not because the desire for peace is inherently wrong. It distinguished between *bad* terrorism (against the U.S.) and *acceptable* or *good* terrorism (against Israel; even if the U.S. will not publicly acknowledge this). Indeed, these good intentions are likely only to further escalate the conflict in the area and bring closer the risk of a nuclear war if for no other reason than the Arab temptation to do Israel away ("After Iraq: President Bush, a Palestinian State and Regional Nuclear War," Louis Rene Beres, *Info Israel*, May, 2003).

The threats the Roadmap poses for the future of Israel is also evident from the writings of fairly *moderate* Arab columnists which are cited in Israeli papers ("Is the Roadmap a Hoax?" Rami G. Khouri, *The Jerusalem Post*, 19 May 2003). The Roadmap is viewed as having some promise but it is mainly viewed as a potential American-Israeli bluff the Arabs should be ready to call. Khouri views Israel as stronger than the Palestinians and expresses concerns for a Palestinian future. It is hard to expect him to express concerns for Israel's future but he conveniently ignores major threats to Israel from (the now defunct Iraq) a potentially nuclear Iran, Syria, Lybia, Saudi Arabia, the Arab League, the U.N., and even Jordan and Egypt who have signed peace treaties with Israel.

Shortly after the war in Iraq started I wrote that "So Far So Good." However, now with regard to the Roadmap the reverse is very appropriate ("So Far, So Bad," Chuck Chriss, JIA, 18 May 2003) with a long list of terror attacks by the Palestinians that are in complete violation of and contradict the letter and the spirit of the Roadmap itself: "Palestinians declare an unequivocal end to violence and terrorism and undertake visible efforts on the ground to arrest, disrupt, and restrain individuals and groups conducting and planning violent attacks on Israelis anywhere." For the Palestinians the Roadmap is obviously measured by how well it will help them dismantle Israel not how quickly it will bring them to peace and establishment of their own state.

Indeed a sampling of political cartoons demonstrates that at least in the U.S. the intention of the Palestinians does not go unnoticed. While there are uncontrolled anti-Israeli cartoons depicting Israel as the culprit in the conflict, such as a Columbia, South Carolina, paper showing Sharon with the *settlements* as the T.N.T. sticks in a suicide bombing vest which he is ready to press, it appears that terrorism is seen for what it is: a detestable political strategic tool that the Palestinians have perfected and is part of their very existence and nature.

Admittedly, the U.S. is not pushing the Roadmap just to *do justice* for the Palestinians. The same way that the British Mandatory Government in Palestine (1917-1948) played the Jewish and Arab communities against each other, so the U.S. is seeking to improve the lot of the Palestinians because it operates under the assumption it will serve American interests by reducing terrorism. Yet, as a noted Middle East scholar suggests, nothing could be more erroneous than that assumption ("A Journey Without Maps," Fouad Ajami, *US News & World Report, Nation & World*, 26 May 2003):

"It may be the proper thing for America to take up the matter of Israel and the Palestinians; it may be a debt owed the stalwart British Prime Minister Tony Blair. But we should know the Arab world for what it is today and entertain no grand illusions about the gratitude the Roadmap would deliver in Palestinian and Arab streets. We buy no friendship in Arab lands with pro-Palestinian diplomacy; we ward off no anti-American terrorism. There is no possibility the rancid anti-Americanism of Hosni Mubarak's Egypt would be assuaged with a big push for an Israeli-Palestinian settlement. The highest religious authority of that land, Sheik al Azhar Muhammad Tantawi, recently called the American-led coalition's effort against Saddam a *crusading war* and said that Muslims everywhere were obliged to take up arms against the *invaders*. This kind of sentiment can never be stilled with a diplomatic effort on behalf of the Palestinians." "There are deeper furies that grip Arab society; we take up a false trail when we fall for the claim that our troubles in that world spring from our policy on Israel and Palestinians. This is the trail our interlocutors in those lands would have us follow. But they are shrewd men, the rulers who hold sway in those Arab lands. It is a cultural norm of the Arab world that strangers are never exposed to family demons. We are strangers in that world, and the Palestine story is all we shall be given, for it is the most convenient of tales."

"A dozen years ago, after the first Gulf War, the Iraqi regime was in its death throes, but we spared it, left Iraq and the Persian Gulf, and began what turned out to be yet another futile pursuit of an Israeli-Palestinian accord. Then, too, we fell for the idea that the American victory in the Arabian Desert had to be redeemed in the alleyways of Nablus and Ramallah. We took the bait

that a great power's authority requires a Palestinian solution. Into the camp of the victors, we brought the Palestinians and the Jordanians who had shouted themselves hoarse in favor of Saddam Hussein. We took them unreformed and unrepentant. Our leverage would never be so great again, our leaders believed then. In the years that followed, anti-American terrorism grew more brazen, and the masters of al Qaeda took our measure. Last week, Secretary Powell arrived in Riyadh to promote peace and instead found himself inspecting a scene of carnage, the latest heartbreaking testament to the furies that now blow through Arab lands."

Ironically, after Sharon accepted the Roadmap based on vague a commitment to take Israel's security concerns "under considerations" the strongest supporters of Israel are also the same power base that supports President Bush, namely, the Christian leadership ("American Christian Leaders Warn Bush About Roadmap," Janine Zacharia, *The Jerusalem Post*, 22 May 2003). And interestingly enough they do so on moral, political and national interests.

If the fight against terrorism is to succeed, it has to be relentless and indiscriminating. Perhaps the conception that guides the fight against terror as well as intentional relations (and diplomacy) should be to stop worrying about how to appease the Arabs, and force the Arabs to acknowledge what is important to the U.S. and Israel. In short, the only currency for peace is peace - not land. It may be difficult to do and politically incorrect but nothing short of a conceptual earthquake will bring about a radical change with promising results. The current Roadmap will only lead to disaster and not only for Israel.

The persistent Arab sense of victimization - as Arafat suggested: "we are not killing enough Israelis" - and their view that their gratification and victory will come only at Israel's annihilation and the destruction of the West has to be done away with once and for all. Otherwise, no map, no agreement, no treaty, and no handshake will have any lasting effect. How to do this? By showing a consistent, persistent and unwavering position which the Arabs will respect. Any cracks, and any inconsistencies will bring us back to the [sisyphic](#) work of starting again and being punished for good will that is missing its purpose because it does not recognize what it is up against.